THE CASE OF FREE Liberty of Conscience

in the exercise of

FAITH and RELIGION,

Presented unto the KING and both Houses of PARLIAMENT.

And also Proved absolute needfull and requisite for them to grant and allow in these Kingdoms, By many Considerations and Reasons unfolding the wofull effects and ill consequence which will infallably follow upon the contrary, To the misery and destruction of these Nations, if the free exercise of Conscience to God-ward, be limitted and violently restrained.

By a Lover of Truth and Just Governments,
EDWARD BURROUGHS.

LONDON,
Printed for Thomas Simmons, 1661.

LONDON,
Printed for Edward Burrows, 1682.

TO THE KING

And both Houſes of PARLIAMENT.

FOraſmuch as it hath pleaſed the Lord God of Heaven and Earth, (who is mighty and powerful, and bringeth to paſs whatſoever he will in the Kingdomes of this World,) ſo to ſuffer it to be accompliſhed, that power and authority is given unto you, to exerciſe over theſe Kingdomes; And whereas the people of theſe Nations (over whom your Authority is extended) are divided in their Judgments in matters Spiritual, and are of different Principles and wayes in Relation to Faith and Worſhip and practiſes of Religion, and yet are all of them free-born people, and Natives of theſe Kingdoms, and as ſuch ought to poſſeſſe and injoy their Lives, Liberties and Eſtates by the juſt Lawes of God and man; And may not juſtly any of them be deſtroyed by you, nor one ſort of another, in their Perſons and Eſtates, by Death, Baniſhment or other Perſecutions, for and becauſe only of their differences in matters of opinion and judgement, nor though they are contrary minded in profeſſion of Faith and Worſhip and Religion, while they do walk peaceably and juſtly in their Converſations, under the Kings Authority, and do not make practiſe of their Religion, to the violating of the Government, nor to the injury of other mens Perſons or Eſtates, but ought rather to be defended and Protected by you in all their rights both as men and Chriſtians, both in things Civil and Spiritual, Notwithſtanding their difference in matters Religious as aforeſaid, they giving proof of their peaceable and honeſt de-

portment towards the King and his Government, and the people of these Kingdomes.

And therefore that due care may be had, as justly it ought to be by you, for the Peace and Prosperity and happiness of these Kingdomes, and that the just Liberties both civil and Spiritual of all people therein, may be allowed and maintained in all the Kings Dominions, and that unity and peace may be fully established, and justice and Righteousness only brought forth in the Land, and all Persecution, Hatred, Contention and Rebellion may die and perish and never more appear; And that all Christian people (though different in judgement and practises in matters of Faith and worship) may be protected to live a quiet and peaceable life in all Godliness and honesty under this Government, and that indignation and vengeance may be diverted from these Lands, which seems to threaten because of the contrary, and that blessings and peace may come, and rest upon this people forever.

Therefore for these ends and causes, and in the Name of the Lord I do propound unto you, and lay before you on the behalf of all the divided people of these Kingdoms, *That free Liberty of Conscience in the exercise of Faith, Worship and Religion to God-wards, may be allowed and maintained unto all, without any imposition, violence or persecution exercised about the same, on the persons, Estates, or consciences of any in any relation to Religion, the Worship of God, Church Government and Ministry; But that all Christian People may be left free in all these Kingdomes, in the exercise of Conscience without being restrained from, or compelled to any way of Worship and practise of Religion, upon any pains and penalties, and that every one may be admitted to worship God in that way as his spirit perswades the heart, and may be defended in such their profession of Religion, while they make not use of their Liberty to the detrement of any other mens persons or Estates as aforesaid.*

And let it not seem strange to you, why I appear in this manner and matter, at such a season as this; for your very happiness, prosperity and establishment, or the contrary, dependeth hereupon, even in allowing and maintaining liberty of Conscience in the exercise of Religion, or in limiting and forcing and persecuting about the same, and this may appear if ye justly consider these things following.

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1. The Lordſhip in and over conſcience, and the exerciſe thereof in all matters of Faith, and worſhip and duty to Godwards, is Gods alone only and proper right and priviledge, and he hath reſerved this power and Authority in himſelf, and not committed the *Lordſhip over Conſcience, nor the exerciſe thereof*, in the caſes of faith and worſhip, to any upon Earth, not to preſcribe and impoſe principles and Practiſes of Faith and worſhip and Religion, by force and violence on the perſons and Conſciences of men, but this belongs only to God, even to work faith in the heart, and to convert to holineſs, and to lead and teach people by his Spirit in his worſhip, and to exerciſe their Conſciences in all his wayes; For the Apoſtles themſelves ſaid, they had not Dominion over the Faith of the Saints, 2 *Cor.* 1. 24. but the Lord alone. And King *Charles* the firſt, ſaid in his Meditations, page 91. of that Edition Printed for *R. Royſton, I have often declared how little I deſire my Laws and Scepter ſhould intrench on Gods Soveraignity which is the only King of mens Conſciences, &c* So that to be Lord in Conſcience and exerciſer thereof in all the matters of Gods Kingdome, is his only proper right, and to him alone it appertains.

2. And therefore conſider if ye do not allow free liberty of Conſcience, and give unto God the Lordſhip and exerciſe thereof in all matters of Faith and Worſhip to him-wards, but do impoſe by violence in forcing to, and reſtraining from ſuch and ſuch wayes of Religion, then ye take Dominion over mens faith, which ye ought not to do, and ye intrench on *Gods Soveraignity*, and uſurps his Authority in exerciſing *Lordſhip over the Conſcience*, in and over which Chriſt is *only King* as before recited, and ye ought not to take his right from him, nor to exerciſe that Authority over mens faith and Conſciences which only appertains unto him, as his proper priviledge; for in ſo doing how dangerous effects may it bring forth, even ye may eaſilie provoke the Lord to wrath againſt you, and bring upon your ſelves ſorrow and miſery, if ye exciſe violence upon mens Conſciences in and concerning Religious matters, contrary to the Scriptures and the example of Primitive Chriſtians who were perſecuted for their Conſcience ſake, but did never perſecute nor puniſh any for that cauſe, nor ever uſed violence about their Religion, as *Charles*

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the I. in his meditations pag. 82. *nothing* (said he) *violent or injurious can be religious*, &c.

3. Consider, if ye allow not the free exercise of Conscience in Spiritual matters, but do take Dominion over mens faith, and impose by violence in the cases of Conscience about Religion, and do not suffer the Lord to enjoy his onely right to be King, in the matters of his own Kingdom, then ye *divert the end of just rule and government among men*, and perverts the end of Gods great love and favour shewed unto you in restoring of you to the place of Authority and Judgment; for the end of just Government upon earth by Kings and Rulers is to exercise Justice, Truth, and Righteousnesse among men, and over the outward man, and to be a praise to all that do well, and walks uprightly, and to be a terrour to all transgressors and them that do evil in their outward man, and to keep the outward man in good order by just Judgment in all cases between man and man; This is only the extent of your Authority over the outward man, and to your Jurisdiction only this belongs, to judge in Truth and Righteousnes, to make Laws and execute them between man and man, to preserve mens persons and estates from the wrong one of another, but not at all to make Laws and execute them between God and mens Consciences in the cases of his Spiritual Kingdom, this power belongs to God, and he hath not committed it to you to exercise; and therefore, let justice, equity and mercy be exercised by you among men, and over the outward man, and in all cases between man and man; but meddle not in the cases of mens faith to God, and their Consciences to him, but leave that unto him alone whose right it is, for it is dangerous, and will bring wofull effects if ye intrench on Gods Soveraignity, and if ye divert the proper end of that Government, and of the Love of God in restoring you into Authority and Power.

4. Consider, if ye allow not free Liberty of Conscience in the profession and practice of spiritual things, but will compel by violence about Religion, *then this will unavoidably produce and bring forth cruel persecution in the Kingdoms*, imprisonment, banishment, and death, and all the evil effects of persecution will fill the Nations; for though never so forceable impositions be laid on the persons, estates, and consciences of men,

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for the cause of difference in Judgment, and practises of Religion, and to compel into Conformity, yet it cannot be supposed that all will bow and conform to the denying of that way which they are perswaded in Conscience to be right, and to the embracing of what they cannot in Conscience believe is of God, but will rather suffer the cruelest death, then conform to any thing contrary to light and knowledge; and if free Liberty of Conscience be denied, many such must needs be exposed to persecution, even to death, though they may be peaceable people, and profitable inhabitants of the Kingdoms, and in the things between man and man, and in all matters temporal pertaining to the King, may be just, and righteous, and unreprovable, yet because of difference in judgment and opinion, exposed to be destroyed in person and estate; and such effects will not be of honour nor safety to these Nations if innocent and just men be destroyed, and their relations ruined, onely for their Conscience and Religion sake, by persecution.

5. Consider, if ye do impose one way of worship by force, and persecute all that are contrary-minded, to prison and death, *then how shall your Names and memorial be left a reproach to generations after you, in dayes to come*, who shall repute you cruel men and persecutors, and such as destroyed your people for difference in matters of Religion, and without just cause, and thus will your names be a curse and not a blessing to your Children and their Children to all ages, if that ye make Laws and execute them to the persecution and destruction of people for Conscience sake, and for difference in Religion; for persecution was never of God, nor ever justified in succeeding ages, but persecutors alwaies were rendred Tyrants, and cruell in the ages succeeding them; for do not you condemn the Papists as oppressors and cruel persecutors in Queen *Maries* daies, for their persecuting your Fore-fathers? And King *James* said *it was usually the condition of Christians to be persecuted, but never to persecute, &c.* in his Apology for the Oath of Allegiance, pag. 4. And indeed, they are no true Christians that persecutes for matters of Conscience, and difference in Opinion, but the false Christians that have a form of godlinesse but are without the power, and out of the Doctrine of the Scriptures, who saith, love your enemies, and render to no man evil for evil,

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but overcome evil with good.

6. Consider, If ye do impose upon the Conscience, and persecute about Religion, *ye can never effect your end thereby*, as to force all into a conformity and uniformity to your Church and Religion; but though death, and banishment, and the loss of all be inflicted, yet such a thing cannot be effected, neither is it the way of Christ to promote his Church, and to convert the contrary-minded by such means as force and violence exercised on mens persons and estates; As K. *James* said in his speech in *Parliament*, 1609. *That it is a sure rule in Divinity, that God never loves to plant his Church with violence and blood*, and if ye do persecute to the heighth in the case of Religion, ye will weaken your selves, and cause the love and good affection of people to dye towards you, and the persecuted will grow, and their cause be made honourable, and many will be increased unto it, for it is usual in ages that the way and Religion which hath been most persecuted hath most grown, and thus it must infallibly be at this day, and ye can never effect your end by persecution, nor promote your own Church; nor destroy all the contrary-minded; As a Privy Counsellor to K. *James* the 5th. of *Scotland*, advised in counsel about the year 1539. upon the occasion of diversities of opinions then in that Kingdom, said he, *It is an errour of State in a Prince for an opinion of piety to condemn to death the adherers to new Doctrines; for the constancy and patience of those who voluntarily suffer all temporal miseries for matters of faith, stir up numbers who at first and before they had suffered were ignorant of their faith and doctrine, not onely to favour their cause, but to embrace their opinions, pity and commiseration opening the gates, and thus their faith is spread, and their number daily increaseth, &c.*

7. Consider, If that ye do not allow Liberty of Conscience but do impose and persecute as aforesaid, though some for your fear, and terrour, and force against their Consciences should deny their Principles, and conform to your Church, such ye cause to sin; for whatsoever is performed by force and not of faith is sin, as it is written, and such their sin will be laid to your charge; and such who cannot deny their Principles and conform, will be destroyed, and their death will be accounted against you in the day of the Lord; and therefore if ye do not allow Liberty of Conscience, many grievous evils

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will infallibly follow, both to your ſelves and your people And what advantage of honour will ſuch be to God and your Church, that are againſt their Conſciences and light forced into a conformity for fear and terrour of men; it makes them manifold more the Children of the Devil, and time-ſervers, and Hypocrites, and deſtroys their ſouls, and ſuch can be no true members of the true Church of Chriſt, but are Reprobates, and a diſhonour to God and your Church.

8. Conſider, if ye conſtrain and compel in matters of Religion, and do not allow liberty of Conſcience, *it is unreaſonable and unequal, and down-right contrary to the Holy and pure Law of God*, which ſaith, *ye ſhall do unto all men, as ye would that men ſhould do unto you, and thou ſhalt love thy neighbour as thy ſelf*, and this is the fulfilling of the Law; But to be impoſed upon and perſecuted for the caſes of Conſciences, and for the matters of Worſhip of God, your ſelves would not willing be againſt your light and knowledge, and then it is unequal and unjuſt, and contrary to the Law of God, for ye to do the ſame to others, which your ſelves would not be done unto; And do not you to this day cry out againſt the *Papiſts* in Queen *Maries* daies, and at this day in other Nations, and condemn them as Tyrants and Oppreſſors, for Perſecuting, Killing, and Deſtroying the Proteſtants, for the matters of their Conſcience and difference in Opinion and Judgment? And will you do the ſame at this day as they do to others, and follow their example of cruelty and perſecution, and break the Law of God, and walk contrary to it, in doing to others what you would not be done unto? And ſeeing you condemn the late foregoing Powers in theſe Kingdoms for Tyrants and Uſurpers, and Oppreſſors, for prohibiting your way of worſhip, and commanding the contrary, and diſanulling ſo much as they could your ſervice Book and Miniſtry; how can you juſtly do the like to others, as to force waies of Religion upon them, and prohibit theirs and command the contrary? if you do it, ye condemn your ſelves by judging of others in the like caſe.

9. Conſider, if ye do not allow liberty of Conſcience, but impoſe Church Government and Religion by paines and penalties, *then ye will fill the land with Hypocrites*, and force people into time-ſerving obedience, and into formal waies of

worship, some against their Consciences, and some in the ignorance thereof, which is great abomination unto the Lord, and such will neither be true and faithful in Church nor State, but will seek advantages against you (if they are forced by violence in the cases of their Consciences) and it will beget great contentions and hatred in the minds of men, and divide them into heart-burnings one against another, and against you and your Government; for if men become Hypocrites for your fear and terror, and deny their professed principles and conform, they will be false-hearted, and envious, and malicious, and attempt any thing to be freed from bondage and impositions of Conscience, and their hearts will be disengaged in love and affection to you-wards; and this will be infallibly the effect of persecution for Conscience sake, as King *Charles* the I. saith in his Medicat. *A charitable connivance and Christian toleration often supplies their strength whom rougher opposition fortifies, and puts the dispised and oppressed party into such combinations, as may most enable them to get a full revenge on those they count their persecutors*, &c.

10. Consider, if ye force Worship, and Religion, and cause men to conform against their Judgements, *how dangerous is this to destroy mens souls*, and to lead them even to destruction; For seeing ye affirm not the infalibility of your Worship and Religion, and yet will impose them, and so engage mens souls in dependancy for Salvation upon things and waies uncertain, and which God gives not the Faith to believe in; I say how dangerous is this to ruin souls; for in no way can the soul be secure but in the faith which God works in the heart, in the Obedience of infallible Truth; So ye run mens souls upon a Rock, and it is unreasonable as before mentioned, that men should be forced into the profession and practice of uncertain and fallible Religion, and that they should be forced by you into that which may be evil, for which not you altogether, but themselves must bear the punishment in the day of the Lord; and except ye could affirm and prove the Infallibility of your Church (which is impossible) there is no equity nor right reason for it, that you should impose upon others any more then others should impose upon you; for as King *Charles* the I. said in his Medit. *He desired not any should be further subject unto him, then he and all of them might be subject unto God*, &c.

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11. Conſider, if ye alow not liberty of Conſcience, but perſecute about the ſame, *ye walk in the way and after the example of ſome of the Heathen Rulers, and of the falſe Chriſtians*, and ſhews that ye allow of the cruel perſecutions by the Church of *Rome*, and ye follow their example, who perſecutes unto death ſuch as they call *Heretiks*, and if ye do perſecute for matters of Conſcience, then ye allow the very deeds of the *Heathens*, who perſecuted the Chriſtians for their Religion ſake, and ye juſtifie the *Papiſts* in perſecuting the *Proteſtants*; and ye plainly demonſtrate unto all the World by your works and fruits, that ye are of *Antichriſt*, if ye impoſe on mens Conſciences by force in the matters of Religion, and perſecute good Conſcience about the ſame; for it was the *Antichriſt* and the *Beaſt*, that firſt forced all to worſhip, and violently engaged all into a conformity, *and killed and perſecuted all that would not worſhip according to the Image*, Rev. 13. *as ye may read*. And it was not Chriſts way, nor the practice of any his Primitive Churches to impoſe and force on the perſons and Conſciences of men concerning their Church and Religion, to cauſe all into a conformity thereunto, and deſtroy and perſecute all that would not; This was not the way of Chriſt and his Apoſtles in their dales, but they left Religion free, and ſaid, *they were not lords over mens faith, nor lords over Gods Heritage*, neither did impoſe upon any in doubtful caſes of conſcience, much leſſe compel againſt mens Conſciences; for the Apoſtle left the practice of doubtful things, *as every one was perſwaded in his own mind, to do or not to do*, without impoſing by force or directions of perſecution about the ſame; Therefore if ye do not allow free liberty of Conſcience, ye are out of the Doctrine and Example of Chriſt and his Apoſtles, and follows the way and example of Antichriſt, Heathen Rulers, and cruel *Papiſts*, to your great diſhonour.

12. Conſider, if ye allow not liberty of Conſcience in the exerciſe of Religion, but impoſe and perſecute about the ſame; *It muſt inavoidable tend to deſtroy and expel Trading, Husbandry, and Merchandize in theſe Kingdomes*, for a great part of Trading and Husbandry, depends upon ſuch kind of perſons, whoſe principles are for toleration in Religion, and hates perſecution and violence in that caſe, this ye will find

true on examination; and if liberty of Conscience be not allowed, such will be exposed to great afflictions, some to imprisonment, and some to poverty, and some to fly into other Countries, to the destruction of their Callings and Trading, and the hands & industriousnes of such people will be weakned in these Kingdomes, if they cannot enjoy their just liberties in temporal and spiritual cases, and the effects thereof will work wofully in this very respect, even to disenable both the hearts and hands of Husbandmen and Trades, and expose these Nations to want and poverty, and to enrich their enemies.

13. Consider, if liberty of Conscience bedenied, and persecution be introduced about the same; *all these and many more woful Consequencies and effects will follow infallably to the ruin of these Kingdoms*, even Wars, and Bloodsheds, and discontents, and Murmurings, and all evil things will be the product of the aforesaid cause, (*viz.*) of denying liberty of Conscience in Religious matters, for in a word it will tend to and may effect the overthrow of you, and ruin your Government and Authority; for the great and mighty God of Heaven and Earth will be provoked against you, and his wrath will go out like a devouring flame upon you, if that ye limit the Holy One, and will not suffer him to exercise his proper right, in being King in mens Consciences, to exercise them in all the waies of his Worship, and matters of his Kingdom, but do oppresse, impose and persecute about the same; This I say will infallibly work the Kingdoms ruin, and expose You and your Government to the indignation of the Holy Lord God, who is tender of his Honour, and will not give it to another, and he loveth and affecteth the cause of such, whose Consciences are truly tender towards him, and though ye persecute such and seek to destroy them, and for a time exercise great afflictions and oppressions upon them, for the matters of their Conscience, yet the God of Heaven will appear for such in his season, and deliver them, and avenge their persecutors. And therefore all ye Rulers consider, and lay these things to heart, least ye provoke the Lord against you, by destroying the People whom he regards, and that not for evil doing, but for the cases of Conscience, and because they can not relinquish their profession and principles of their Religion,

and bow and conform in things againſt their light and knowledge.

14. Conſider, If ye allow not Liberty of Conſcience, *what exceeding danger ye run your ſelves into*, even to deſtroy juſt men and righteous, as Heriticks and erroneous, and may promote Hereticks as Church-members, both which are great abominations in the ſight of God, and this danger ye bring upon your ſelves, for ye are not infallible Judges, who are Hereticks, and who are not; and therefore may eaſily proceed in that way to puniſh ſuch as Hereticks that are not truly ſo, and except ye could affirm and prove your poſſeſſion of the infallible Spirit, ye can no way proceed juſtly and reaſonably to deny Liberty of Conſcience in the exerciſe of Religion, nor puniſh and perſecute any in that caſe; but if ye do, ye do it in ignorance, and knows not what ye do, and may as ſoon deſtroy true Chriſtians and Saints, as Hereticks, for want of infallible judgment to diſcern who are, and who are not; and this is a danger ye ought to avoid by allowing the free exerciſe of Conſcience, as the Lord perſwades every mans heart.

15. And laſtly alſo conſider what a reproach you are under, If ſuch whom ye call Hereticks, (and yet doth not infallibly know that they are ſuch) be puniſhed, and perſecuted, and deſtroyed for their Religion ſake, who are juſt and upright men, in their converſing between man and man, and unreprovable in their dealings among men; (whether they erre in judgment in ſpiritual knowledge, or not erre) and ſuch as are drunkards and prophane perſons go at liberty, in their ſtage-playing and gaming, and the like, even tolerated, and unpuniſhed, and not prohibited, whom all do know & can diſtinguiſh who ſuch are when they appear, this will render your Government to evil reputation, both in this preſent time and in ages to come; and therefore conſider it, if Drunkards, Gameſters, and prophane perſons have more toleration and liberty in their wayes of open vanity, then ſober temperate perſons in the exerciſe of their Conſciences in Religion, which if any ſuch do erre in principle (which is not infallibly known to you) it is onely to their own hurt in the ſight of God, and he onely and not you ought to puniſh them in that caſe; but prophane perſons as afore-mentioned are eaſily judged by all to be ſuch,

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and their errour in practiſe is hurtful to the whole Kingdoms and pertains to you to puniſh; as Dr. *Taylor* now a Biſhop in *Ireland* hath ſaid, his words in this caſe are worth obſerving, *why are we ſo zealous*, ſaith he, *againſt thoſe we call Heretick, and yet great friends with Drunkards, and Swearers, and Fornicators, and intemperate and idle perſons; I am certain a Drunkard is as contrary to God, and lives as contrary to the Laws of Chriſtianity as a Heretick, and I am alſo ſure that I know what Drunkenneſſe is, but I am not ſure that ſuch an opinion is hereſie*, &c.

And theſe things I do in all meekneſſe and due reſpect both to your places and perſons, preſent to your ſerious conſiderations, that ye may prevent theſe evil effects that are ſo deſtructive unto you and theſe Kingdoms, which abſolutely muſt follow, upon *not allowing free Liberty of Conſcience in the exerciſe of Religion*; and if any ſhall object, That to tolerate and allow Liberty of Conſcience in Religion is inconſiſtent with the ſafety and peace of the King and theſe Kingdoms; I ſhall be deſirous to hear from wiſe men what ſuch objections are, ſtated by them, and wherein they ſay it is not Congruous with the happineſſe and peace of theſe Nations, to grant and allow the premiſes; And on ſuch occaſion, I ſhould make clearly to appear the contrary, and that it is only conſiſtant with the peace and proſperity of theſe Kingdoms (conſidering them in their preſent eſtate) to grant and allow free liberty of Conſcience as aforeſaid, in the exerciſe of Religion unto all Chriſtian people.

O! remember ye mighty men of the Kingdom, that the Great and Mighty God takes notice of all your doings, and accordingly will he reward you in his dreadful day, which is near to come upon all the World; and wo unto the wicked in that day. O! remember that ye your ſelves not long ſince were a ſuffering people, and now you are raiſed up again; And therefore be not too zealous to afflict others, eſpecially for the caſes of their Conſciences, in reference to their faith and perſwaſions about Religion; but be gentle, meek, and long-ſuffering towards all, for that is the way to make peace and preſerve it with all men, that will gain the affections of the contrary minded; but force and rigour will exaſperate the more, and never truly reconcile differences among men; and make no Laws contrary or different to the pure Law of God,

but

but let pure Conſcience go free without force or reſtraint in the exerciſes of Religion, and let God have his Prerogative, and Lordſhip, in the exerciſe of Conſcience; but let your Authority be extended over the outward man, in the matters between man and man, to preſerve peace and right in all outward relation; and be Wiſe and Learned ye Rulers of the Earth, and kiſſe the Son leaſt he be angry and ye periſh, and if his wrath be kindled but a little, bleſſed are they that truſt in him. This is your time and day, happy are ye, if it be given to you to do the work that God requires of you only.

The 26th. *of the third Month*, 1661.

THE END.